

Immigration scams are on the rise in the US. Here's what you should know

Synopsis

The scams are varied and use multiple points of contact like emails, websites, and mail. Many times, the amount of information the scammers possess about you might astonish you, but that should be taken as an indicator of the caller's veracity.



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Khanna is a member of the Virginia and D.C. Bars and the principal of the Law Offices of Rajiv S. Khanna, PC. Since 1993, he has focused his and the firm's practice on employment and business-based immigration and related administrative and federal audits, investigations and litigation. The firm represents individuals and businesses from every major city in the US and internationally.

Last week, one of our clients received a phone call from a woman claiming to be an [immigration](#) officer. Her caller ID showed that she was calling from a government agency. She threatened that a warrant had been issued because our client's paperwork had not been updated. She also insisted that our client stay on the phone and not disconnect because the call was being "recorded." If the call were to be terminated, the officer could no longer help. She could fix the problem if payments were made immediately through online gift cards. She was so convincing that even our worldly-wise, super-intelligent client was frightened.

Our client surreptitiously emailed me and included me on a three-way call without the knowledge of this woman. It took me about fifteen seconds to establish that the "immigration officer" was an obvious [fraud](#). Getting rid of her was really easy after that.

When I posted this scam alert on social media, hundreds of similar cases were revealed. These scams take different forms, but the central ideas are the same: you are in serious trouble with local, state, or federal law; the problem can be fixed by payment of money (no checks); and the call must not be terminated.

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[USCIS](#) has noted amongst their alerts, specifically for India:

Beware of emails supposedly sent by the USCIS New Delhi Field Office or the Department of State in India. These emails may contain attachments, claim you have been approved for a [visa](#) to the U.S., or request money for visa processing.

Emails like that may be scams because:

- Emails from the U.S. government always end in the domain ".gov;"

- USCIS will never send an email indicating you've been approved for a diversity visa, immigrant visa, nonimmigrant visa, or any other type of immigration benefit; and
- USCIS will never ask you to transfer money to an individual (see Payments by Phone or Email).

The US State Department warns:

Program Scammers Sending Fraudulent Emails and Letters

The Department of State, Office of Visa Services, advises the public of a notable increase in fraudulent emails and letters sent to Diversity Visa (DV) program (Visa Lottery) applicants. The scammers behind these fraudulent emails and letters are posing as the U.S. government in an attempt to extract payment from DV applicants. All applicants should be familiar with information about DV scams provided by the Federal Trade Commission. Applicants are encouraged to review the rules and procedures for the DV program so that you know what to expect, when to expect it, and from whom.

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Most important Points

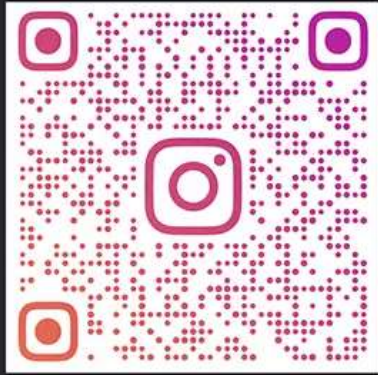
- No government agency calls to threaten you over the phone.
- No government agency insists that you must not disconnect their job.
- No government agency demands immediate payments through unusual means like gift cards, Western Union, Moneygram, etc.
- It is easy to make caller ID, emails, and websites appear to be genuine.
- Hang up on these callers and register a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov>. Spreading awareness is our social responsibility, and being aware is our best defense.
- For international students, many educational institutions have posted detailed warnings on their websites. If you are a student, report any such incidents to your school authorities as well.

Some notable government websites that keep us aware:

US Citizenship and Immigration Services: <https://www.uscis.gov/scams-fraud-and-misconduct/avoid-scams/common-scams>

US State Department: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fraud.html>

Federal Trade Commission: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/features/scams-against-immigrants>
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1. On your profile, tap the three horizontal lines in the top-right corner of the screen.
2. Tap "QR Code."
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